Dear Friend,

Do you know a veteran who needs help securing service-connected compensation or an overdue medal? If so, I want you to know about the special veterans' services my office offers.

In the past few years, I have secured more than $3.4 million in overdue service-connected compensation payments for veterans in my district. In fact, just last week I delivered a check for $89,349 in back payments, and a monthly check of $974 for the rest of his life, to a World War II veteran who unsuccessfully fought the bureaucracy for almost 65 years after suffering hearing loss in the Pacific theater.

Due to years of neglect, the VA has built up a backlog of more than 150,000 claims. It currently has a total of 400,000 pending claims.

The good news is, that is starting to change. In 2007, I helped lead the fight for the largest increase in veterans' health care in the 77-year history of the VA. This year, as the only New Yorker on the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Subcommittee, I helped to build on that increase. Now, I understand that we must reduce federal spending in many areas and safeguard tax dollars. But I refuse to balance budgets on the backs of veterans who have been waiting since World War II for their service-connected compensation payments...or who suffered from Agent Orange in Vietnam...or who are returning from Afghanistan and Iraq with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

That is why one of my office's highest priorities is serving veterans who need help.

If you know of someone who needs our intervention, please call my office at 631-951-2210. You can also contact us for help with immigration and visa paperwork, Medicare and Medicaid, and other government programs. And for the latest updates on what I'm doing in Washington, visit http://israel.house.gov.

The highest privilege --and the most important responsibility -- I have is protecting our protectors and defending our defenders. Please let me know how I can help someone you know.

Sincerely,

Steve Israel
Member of Congress